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HD **B.C.'s LNG investment could cost the NDP; Environmental backlash over celebrated deal**

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Victoria

A funeral procession is set to wind through the streets of Nelson, B.C., on Monday. In the spirit of April Fool's Day, the event will mourn the loss of the reputation of the community's MLA, Energy Minister Michelle Mungall, as an environmentalist.

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"People are speaking and writing eulogies for the Michelle we loved and voted for, and for our hopes for her resurrection as our climate leader," said organizer Madelyn MacKay, a lifelong member of the New Democratic Party that Ms. Mungall represents.

The backlash was prompted by an energy project. The B.C. NDP is on track to pass legislation this spring that will secure the largest private-sector investment in the province's history, a liquefied natural gas (LNG) export terminal. But in the process, it is souring relations with its minority government partner, the B.C. Green Party, and with environmental activists, who say the proposed law undermines efforts to combat climate change.

Bill 10, the Income Tax Amendment Act, proposes a tax credit for major liquefied natural gas projects that is tailored to the $40-billion LNG Canada development. Ms. Mungall, who once paddled with Ms. MacKay to protest against the construction of B.C. Hydro's Site C dam, is now a lead minister championing the project.

In 2015, Ms. Mungall criticized the then-Liberal government for pursuing an LNG project as "selling out our future potential at reducing our impact on global warming." On Tuesday, she told the House that LNG Canada will bring $23-billion in revenue to the province over the life of that project, to help pay for programs her constituents want.

Keith Wiley, one of those constituents in Ms. Mungall's Nelson-Creston riding, said those two positions don't mesh. "LNG is problematic with its emissions. It will make us a climate criminal."

A formal pact with the three-member Green Party caucus allowed the NDP to form a minority government in 2017. The agreement included a commitment to climate action – a deal that the Greens say never envisioned a project that will generate, in phase one, 3.4 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions annually. That is nearly a tenth of the total GHGs that will be allowed in B.C. in 2030.

“So, I say to the NDP MLAs who vote for this, shame on you, and don’t you, for one second, ever come to me and say you are supporting climate change action in this province,” Green Party Leader Andrew Weaver admonished New Democrats in the Legislature during debate on the bill.

In an interview, Mr. Weaver said he will continue to support the minority government because of progress in other areas, but he said the NDP gave away far too much to secure the investment. “They were a bunch of suckers,” he said.

Ms. Mungall declined to be interviewed. Environment Minister George Heyman said the relationship between the NDP and the Greens continues to be productive.

“The last couple of days have been testy,” he said. “But where there are differences, we find ways to work through it.”

The NDP will have no trouble passing Bill 10, because the opposition Liberal Party keenly supports the creation of an LNG industry in B.C. The bill has already passed first and second reading with the combined support of the NDP and Liberal members.

“There’s not a lot of suspense about the approach we will take,” said Mike de Jong, the Liberal critic on the LNG file. While in government, the Liberals created the Prosperity Fund to collect the massive revenues it expected to reap from LNG.

But it was the NDP government that snagged the first major final investment decision last fall.

Mr. de Jong is critical of the way the NDP have structured the deal with LNG Canada, saying there should be more disclosure around the details. But that won’t be enough to drive the Liberals to scuttle the project by turning down the enabling legislation.

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